

Backstage

A SPECIAL NEWSLETTER - FOR SUBSCRIBERS ONLY

Great Scot! Who's that in the corner?



This month editor Steve Jarratt says a cheery 'hello' to a new network and a new tall Scots bloke. Which one will prove the most useful remains to be seen...

Another month, another *Amiga Format*. And it wouldn't be *AF* without things either a) changing, or b) being in a mess. And this issue, we've got both!

Steve McGill finally joins the team as technical gamesy bloke (or is that gamesy technical fella?). Either way, our resident tall Scot will be helping out Steve Bradley in the games department, while hassling Nick Veitch for techy things to fiddle with.

Steve possesses something of a video bent and so will add another facet to *AF*'s expert workforce. I hope you'll make him welcome by sending in a load of difficult queries about all things video-and-Amiga-related.

With regards to the mess, *Amiga Format* - and, indeed, Future Publishing as a whole - is having a new network fitted. Obviously, since this necessitates feeding miles of fibre optic cables throughout the building, there's a degree of debris and disturbance involved. My desk is regularly covered in what looks

suspiciously like asbestos powder and the ceiling hasn't been the same since. We've also had to put up with incessant drilling and a not-small-amount of fire alarm testing, neither of which have helped lighten the office mood - especially when we're all a bit strung out over deadline!

However, it's all in a very good cause, since we've upgraded to a shiny new Ethernet network - which is substantially faster than the poxy old AppleTalk network that was previously in operation.

This new network is designed to help all the Apple Macs talk to one another in the different offices and buildings that Future Publishing has infiltrated in Bath. The good thing about this is that, although the people who paid for all this stuff to be installed don't yet realise it, the Amigas in our office will all be hooked into the network too.

The reason for doing this? Well, Future is setting up its own Internet node. This will mean that we can trundle along the superhighway with the best of them (and without all that tedious modem business). The method is simple: the new network will be a standard Ethernet one, based on the TCP/IP protocol. Thanks to ASDG, who loaned us some network cards for a feature we did a while back, we can access the network. All we need to do is cable it up.

The funny thing is, that when we do this, I guarantee that when publishers and assorted other top knobs stroll through the office, they

Continued overleaf ➡

SHOCK! HORROR! AF'S ART SUPREMO REVEALS TRUE SEX



Sue White - Art Editor, yesterday.

Amiga Format has been infiltrated by a girl! The *Amiga Format* office has been in a state of collapse since it was revealed that the art editor is, in fact, a girl. Rumours had been flying around for some time regarding the strange bloke in the corner with a vocal pitch Geddy Lee would be proud of.

The now-longest-serving member of *Amiga Format* was drafted in two years ago as art assistant to cope with the extra

Continued overleaf ➡

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workload generated by the first ever *Amiga Format* Special. Marcus Dyson was quoted at the time as saying: "We all felt sorry for this little lad who had come all the way from Cardiff dragging a portfolio that was as big as himself, so I asked him what kind of music he liked. When I found out that he could recite all the tracks on *Physical Graffiti* backwards I said 'right lad, you're in.'"

IS HE, OR ISN'T SHE?

But speculation on the sex of the arty bod started in January 1993 when Marcus left his position of Art Editor to become Editor of *Amiga Format*. His ample-sized shoes were filled with what can only be described as a dainty size four. However, rumours were quashed when a score of 113 million on the *Addams Family* pinball table at the Local satisfied the AF team that no girlie could possibly get a higher score than Richard Jones.

However the 'is-he, isn't she?' rumour mill continued to work overtime when other members of staff realised that the Art Ed was never to be found in the gents toilet and showed no interest in joining in Steve Bradley's frequent (and often tedious) football discussions.

SOARING TEMPERATURES

But yesterday, due to the soaring temperatures here in Bath, the Art Editor came out of the closet - or more correctly, out of the wardrobe - with a shocking floral print dress. She then refused point blank to stand on a chair when the fan was blowing, even though Frank Bartucca persistently asked her to reach down books from the top shelf.

"It was only a matter of time before they found out," she told reporters yesterday. "Frank was starting to ask why I didn't shower with him after aerobics. Richard Jones kept asking if it was strictly necessary for me to write another caption for a Jon Bon Jovi picture I'd smuggled into the magazine."

"That's the beauty of my job, you see. I am responsible for the design of AF and I liaise with the writers to come up with the best way of illustrating their work. I am responsible for the cover, the photography in the issue and Frank. I also have to be nice to the folk who scan our pictures in, and the folk who operate the Linotron (the machine that outputs our pages to film). And if I want to use a picture of Jon Bon Jovi, I'll use one."

And the truth was out.

are bound to ask what all the cables coming out of the back of our Amigas are. And when we tell them they'll say either: "Ooh, that's clever" or "Why would you want to do that?". The fact that every Macintosh in the office is hooked up in a similar way will seem perfectly natural.

The Amiga is a computer, so it shouldn't seem strange when it does the sort of things that other computers are capable of. Another odd thing is that I expect the people on the other computer magazines at Future won't ever think of attaching anything other than a Mac to the network. If we're going to surf the Net, we're going to do it in style.

Once we're all set up, there will be a special *Amiga Format* address where anyone with an Amiga and a modem can get it touch with us. And, unlike *Sponge!*, the *Amiga Format* BBS, we can have the messages transferred direct to our Mac screens via our inter-office E-mail system. Technology, eh?

MAG TWEAKS?

I've now been at the helm of AF for a whole three months (and a bit), and have already instigated some changes - most of them minor, but a few major. And, to be honest, I want to know what you think. Personally, I reckon *Amiga Format* looks a lot nicer than it has done for a while (thanks to the efforts of Sue and Frank) and, hopefully, it's a bit easier

Write to Backstage

If there's anything you would like to see in *Backstage* or *Amiga Format*, write to:

**Backstage,
Amiga Format,
30 Monmouth Street,
Bath, Avon BA1 2BW.**

to find your way around the mag. Of course, *Amiga Format* is your magazine - we're just the people who make it. So I want some feedback on the changes we're making, as well as other things you'd like to see - after all, I doubt very much if you consider the mag to be 'perfect'!

There's a readers' survey nestling inside this very issue, so when you fill that in, don't forget to add a few ideas at the end - or write your comments on another piece of paper and include it in the envelope. I'll be airing some of the better suggestions in the pages of *Backstage*, and may just put a few prizes your way, depending on how generous I'm feeling.

And on a similar subject, the response to my call for *Backstage* letters has been pathetic! Unless you lot get your act together (and there are thousands of subscribers out there) I shall have no option but to wobble on about whatever happens to come to mind. And I don't think you'd want that.

The Future Entertainment Show

A special invitation from the editor

Come to the FES for FREE!

Because you're a valued AF subscriber, we don't want you to miss out on this year's Future Entertainment Show. It's going to be the best ever, because everything in it has been designed especially to help you get the best from your Amiga. At the heart of the show will be a theatre dedicated to the Amiga, where you can meet the AF crew, key developers and industry figures.

We'll be looking at everything from virtual reality and the Internet to multimedia and CD-ROM and covering everyday

computing problems. If you get five friends to come to the show with you and book all six tickets in advance at the discount rate of £6 (tickets on the door are £7), we'll send you your ticket free!

Call our Ticket Hotline 0369 4235, or fill in the coupon and send a cheque for £30 payable to The Future Entertainment Show.

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AF Subscriber Superdisk

Issue 63 • September 1994

Jason Holborn lifts the lid on a treasure chest of useful utilities, games and Coverdisk support files just for subscribers. You lucky lot!

GETTING STARTED

This disk is not bootable, so to access the programs on it you need to boot up your machine using your normal Workbench disk. In order to pack on a large number of files, we've compressed all of them using Stefan Boberg's LHA program, but don't panic. To decompress them, all you need to do is to click on the appropriate icon. This starts off a script which decompresses the programs and files to the RAM disk. You can then run them from here, or copy them to another disk.

ON THIS MONTH'S DISK...

On this month's Subscribers' Superdisk we have the following Public Domain and Shareware programs and files:

Derring Do - Prepare yourself for a nostalgia overload in this brilliant *Blitz Basic 2* incarnation of the arcade classic *Mr Do!*

***Alert Patch** - Confused by those software failure numbers? *Alert Patch* may not stop a system failure, but at least you'll know what caused the crash!

Imagine Objects - We've got two more 3D objects for use with Impulse's excellent *Imagine* ray-tracing program.

ACalc - The Workbench already has a calculator, but it's nowhere near as capable

as this brilliant little commodity which is available at the touch of a key!

***NoteIt!** - The common Post It! note comes bang up to date with this useful reminder utility. What's more, you don't have to worry about cleaning the glue off your screen!

***WinDaemon** - Enhance your Workbench with *WinDaemon*, possibly the most useful Workbench enhancer ever written! *WinDaemon* enables you to assign hot keys to just about every aspect of Workbench.

OctaMED Tune - Get a taste of what our Coverdisk music maestro *OctaMED Pro 5.0* is capable of in the hands of a professional.

* Workbench 2.0 or greater required.

DERRING DO

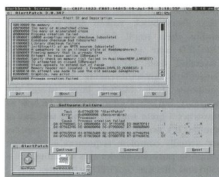
Remember the *Blitz Basic 2* competition organised by Acid Software in *AF52*? Well, we received some truly excellent games and naturally we thought you'd want to see some of the entries for yourselves. So here's one of the best ones.

Derring Do, was expertly programmed by *Amiga Format* reader Nick Slaven from Sheffield, and is a *Blitz Basic 2* version of the classic arcade game *Mr Do!*. The idea is to guide an apprentice wizard (that's you) around screen after screen of arcade action collecting the little cherries buried beneath the ground. But life isn't as simple as it first appears, as is so often the case in conversions of arcade classics.

Following hot on the heels of our hero is an army of crazed mole-like creatures who aren't keen on the idea of losing their cherries, so to speak, and therefore whizz around trying to do awful things to you.

The little sprite chap isn't completely vulnerable, however - not only can he bounce magic balls off the walls and into the path of the pursuing baddies, but he can also drop strawberries on their heads by digging underneath the fruit. Confused? Give *Derring Do* a go and the gameplay will become blindingly obvious. Enjoy!

Continued overleaf →



Wouldn't you rather have lots of useful information instead of the unfriendly Commodore Software Failure requester? If so, *Alert Patch* is for you!

ALERT PATCH

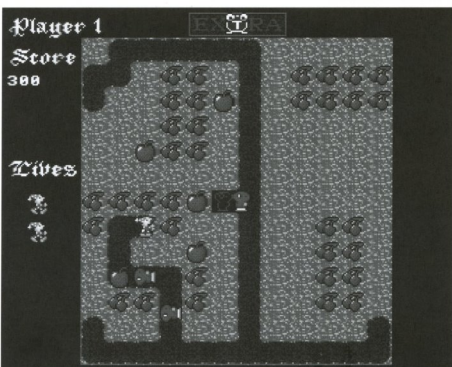
How many times have you had to face the dreaded Software Failure requester only to be greeted by some meaningless number? Let's face it - 0x80000003 is hardly the most descriptive error message! Public Domain programmer David Swasbrook obviously felt a more detailed explanation was necessary, which is precisely why he produced *Alert Patch*.

Alert Patch is a clever little utility that patches into the Exec library's *Alert* function. Although *Alert Patch* won't stop the crash, it at least attempts to give you a straightforward explanation of what went wrong.

Once patched, *Alert Patch* steps in whenever your Amiga is feeling poorly and instead of producing a meaningless error code, the program generates its own Software Failure requester complete with lots of useful information, such as the cause of the crash and a full run-down of the processor's data and address registers.

Before you can get *Alert Patch* to work, you need to transfer the file *matrix.library* (which can be found in the *WinDaemon* drawer) into the *Libs* drawer on your Workbench disk. To do this, load up the Workbench Shell and enter the following line:

Copy SUBDISK:WinDaemon/
Matrix.Library LIBS:
(The instruction above should be on one line.)



Collect the cherries but avoid the baddies - as *Derring Do* proves, the simplest games are often the best!



Because ACALC runs as a commodity, it can even be displayed on another program's custom screen.

ACALC

Of course, calculator utilities are nothing new – indeed, Commodore have bundled one free of charge with every Amiga sold since the original A1000 in 1985. The only problem is that the Commodore calculator has hardly changed since then – to call it simple would be something of an understatement.

With ACALC installed on your Workbench, however, you can whizz through those complicated calculations in no time.

The great thing about ACALC is that, unlike Commodore's offering, it runs as a commodity (if you have a machine with Workbench 2.0 or better), which means that once run, it happily sits in the background until it is needed. All you have to do then is to press the left Alt key along with the C key (C for calculator, geddit!) and ACALC pops up on to the front screen (even if it isn't the Workbench). What a super little utility!

WINDAEMON

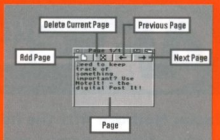
The Amiga's Workbench may make Windows on the PC look rather sorry for itself but it's still far from perfect.

To take it one step closer to perfection, install WinDaemon on your Workbench disk and you'll never look back. WinDaemon adds all sorts of useful new features to Workbench including full AReXX control (so you can close windows via an AReXX script), screen selection

NOTEIT!

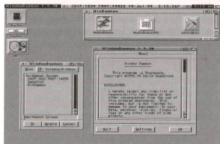
Walk into the AF office at any time and the chances are that you'll find those little yellow Post It! notes plastered over most of our Macs and Amigas with messages and phone numbers scrawled across them. In an attempt to save trees, however, PD programmer Ryan Bruner has come up with Note It! – a digital interpretation of those useful bits of yellow paper.

The program is simple enough – click on its icon and a little window pops up on to the screen. This window contains a page – think of it as a single Post It! note – and each page can contain any amount of text which can be scrolled into view using the cursor keys. Text can be entered directly into a page via the keyboard or from the Amiga's clipboard.



Keep track of all those important events and appointments with NoteIt!

Once entered, NoteIt! automatically saves the text off to disk and so the contents of your notes are saved when you exit the program.



WinDaemon adds all sorts of useful functions to the Amiga's Workbench to make it even easier to use than it is already. Windows? Pahn!

and all sorts of other handy enhancements. For example if you click on a window's close gadget while holding down the Control key, the window's parent window opens.

Before you can run WinDaemon, it needs to be installed. Don't worry – installation isn't difficult. Inside the WinDaemon window is a little file called matrix.library. This file needs to be transferred to the Libs drawer on your Workbench boot disk. To do this follow the installation instructions for the Alert Patch program on the previous page.



If you need a little musical inspiration then load up this month's super OctaMED musical module to see how it's really done.

OCTAMED TUNE

You've either got it or you haven't – musical talent that is. If you're about as musical as a reject from Stock, Aitken and Waterman's studios then you'll want to load up the OctaMED tune to use with your OctaMED Coverdisk from AF62. It may not be a particularly groundbreaking tune (French composer Jean Michel Jarre wrote the original), but it's a good example of how to construct a great song from short sections of sample. It's worth noting how some samples are actually complete sequences – although sampling purists consider this cheating, it's a valid and effective OctaMED technique.

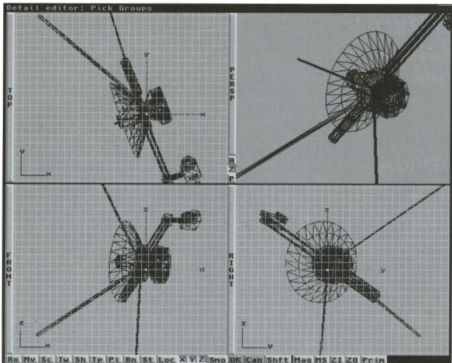
The choice of track is rather ironic – Jean Michel Jarre's original was one of the first tracks he ever wrote that used sampled sounds grabbed on a £100,000 Fairlight sampler. How times have changed!

IMAGINE OBJECTS

Every month we try to supply you with at least one Imagine object for use in your ray-traced creations, but this month we've got two – a Jurassic Park-like Allosaurus dinosaur object and a Voyager One spacecraft. If you render an image using any of the objects included on this or past Subscribers' Superdisks, why not send it in to our Gallery section – we'd love to see the results of your efforts, and there may even be a prize for the best ones.

If you have any suggestions, comments or programs that you would like to see on the Subscribers' Superdisk, please write to:

Jason Holborn
Amiga Format Subscribers' Superdisk
Future Publishing
30 Monmouth Street
Bath, Avon BA1 2BW



Add a little high technology to your deep space renderings with the Voyager object on this month's disk.